Faith, Righteousness and the First Works

> **But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.**
> **Isaiah 64:6 (KJV)**

Understanding faith is crucial to our walk with Christ. As we see in the above verse our own righteousness is insufficient, it is like filthy rags. The only way we may approach the Father is wearing the pure white robes that Christ gives to us at the moment of salvation and maintaining them until the end.

> **Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.**
> **James 2:17 (KJV)**

This is where the "Once Saved, Always Saved" crowd starts to shuffle their feet, because they take the fact that we cannot earn our salvation through works (or any other means) and claim that after confessing Christ there is nothing required of us to maintain our salvation.

> **Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.**
> **Revelation 2:5 (KJV)**

They believe in Jesus like a child believes in Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. But if we want righteousness before the Father we must do the first works; not in order to prove our belief, but as a natural result of it. If I tell you your house is on fire, and you tell me you believe me, then proceed to sit down while it burns around you, do you really believe?

> **Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.**
> **Matthew 6:1-4 (KJV)**

This concept is crucial for every Christian to understand completely. He sees the thoughts and intentions of our hearts; He knows when we do something to be seen by others as the Pharisees did. The only works that are counted as righteous are those done based on faith in God and His Word.

> **By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,**

prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.
Hebrews 11:7 (KJV)

Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter. Paul gives us many examples of this saving faith in action; Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, and Samuel and so many more. After making the decision to follow Christ walking by faith is the most important concept in the bible.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
Hebrews 11:6 (KJV)

This is why we follow the law written in our hearts and eschew sin, because of faith in the Word of God. As the actions all the saints listed in Hebrews 11 testify it is the works of acting on our faith in God that is counted as righteousness. Without faith it is impossible to please Him; are we going to be skipping by God's throne into Heaven on judgment day if He is not pleased with us? If we truly believe the works naturally follow.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.
Hebrews 11:1-3 (KJV)

I had to really study this passage for a while to get the full meaning because it is so profound. If you're like me you thought faith was just a warm, fuzzy feeling, an inner sense of hope, but there's more to it. It isn't just a feeling but the ***substance of that hope***, do you see? It is a literal substance like any other on this earth; it is evidence more real than anything found in a courtroom. It is real! Faith when it is based on the Word of God is every bit as real as the things we see with our eyes. God just spoke the word and everything we see came into being.

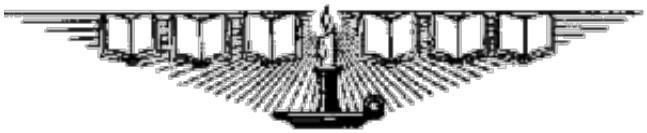
This is why faith is so important; it is the source of all our power. We express it through words and deeds. When we speak the Word of God or those that the Holy Spirit puts in our mouth we do so based on that faith. When we act on those words we hear or read in the bible like those saints listed in Hebrews 11 it is counted as righteousness. These are the first works (**Revelation 2:5 KJV**) that we must do.

But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.
Daniel 11:32 (KJV)

This is why Satan doesn't want us correcting bad doctrine. This is why he doesn't want Christians knowing they have a part to play in their own salvation. He wants us to be anemic and ineffective, not speaking scripture with our lips. "Don't quote scripture at people" says Carter Conlon, yet Christ Himself taught us by example to quote scripture; it is what He used against Satan in the desert. Those words are our connection to that substance of faith through God our power source. They are our sword, our only offensive weapon.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.
James 1:22 (KJV)

The number one deed of faith we perform is obedience. Forget what your pastor, ministry or denomination says and do what the bible tells you. Read it for yourself; don't depend on any other source. You don't need a teacher because the Holy Spirit will be your teacher (**Luke 12:12**, **1 John 2:27 KJV**).

> **Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**
> **1 John 2:15 (KJV)**

If we really believe then we do something about it. Start building your ark like Noah did by getting oil for your lamps. Put away the things of this world; take a stand and refuse to serve the god of this world like the Hebrew children. Warn others now to repent; don't wait for a whale to swallow you like Jonah did.